

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9805

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 2384

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJECT: CULTURAL ATTACKS RAGE ON

REF: HONG KONG 2321

SUMMARY. PROVINCES ARE RESPONDING TO THE SAVAGE PEOPLE'S DAILY ATTACK ON THE OPERA "THREE VISITS TO TAOFENG" BY REPRINTING IT, EXPANDING ON IT, OR ATTACKING "POISONOUS WEEDS" IN THEIR OWN AREAS. ANOTHER NEW PHASE OF THE MOVEMENT HAS POSSIBLY BEGUN, WITH CHIANG CHING EMERGING AS THE FACE BEHIND ITS ASSAULT ON "BAD" LITERATURE AND ART. END SUMMARY.

1. SEVERAL PROVINCES ARE REPEATING THE SAVAGE ATTACK ON THE OPERA "THREE VISITS TO TAOFENG" CARRIED IN PEOPLE'S DAILY FEBRUARY 28 (REFTEL). IN SHANSI, WHERE THE OPERA ORIGINATED, THE CRITICISM IS MOST INTENSE, WITH THE PROVINCIAL CCP COMMITTEE THERE PLEDGING IN A DIRECTIVE TO "SETTLE ACCOUNTS" WITH THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OPERA (MARCH 1 BROADCAST). THE COMMITTEE IS CLEARLY WORRIED ABOUT SHANSI'S ROLE IN "RECOMMENDING" THE
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OPERA FOR THE RECENT NORTH CHINA THEATRICAL FESTIVAL, WHERE IT

WAS "EXPOSED AND CRITICIZED." AT A MARCH 1 RALLY OF 30,000 ATTENDED BY SHANSI CCP SECRETARY HAN YING, A SPEAKER HIT AT THOSE (CALLED "YOU PEOPLE") NOW TRYING TO "DENY" THE "ASSAULT ON THE PARTY" THAT WAS IMPLICIT IN THEIR APPROVING OF THE OPERA (MARCH2 BROADCAST).

2. OTHER PROVINCES ARE ON TO "POISONOUS WEEDS" IN THEIR OWN AREAS. TAKEN TOGETHER, THE REPORTS SUGGEST ANOTHER NEW PHASE OF THE ANTI-LIN/CONFUCIUS MOVEMENT HAS BEGUN. IN ADDITION TO LIAONING (HONG KONG 2254), KIANGSI AND SHANTUNG HAVE SLAMMED LOCAL ARTISTIC CREATIONS. THE ATTACKED SHANTUNG DRAMA, "TURBULENT BEACH" SET IN 1963, CONCERNS AGENTS OF "THE UNITED STATES AND CHIANG KAI-SHEK." BUT THE CRITICISM FOCUSES ON "BEACH'S" PORTRAYAL OF THE LOCAL HEROES AS BUMBLERS, AND THE MASSES AS EASILY DECEIVED (MARCH 1 BROADCAST).

3. THE KIANGSI ATTACK IS MORE SIGNIFICANT. IT IDENTIFIES A "BAD" OPERA ENTITLED "CASE NO. 302" AS "ABSOLUTELY NOT AN ISOLATED CASE," BUT PART OF A "COUNTERATTACK" DESIGNED TO "SETTLE OLD SCORES WITH THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IN ART AND LITERATURE PERSONALLY LED BY CHIANG CHING" (FEBRUARY 28 BROADCAST). THE OSTENSIBLE KIANGSI TARGETS ARE "CERTAIN LEADING COMRADES OF OUR PROVINCE IN CHARGE OF CULTURAL WORK." THE KIANGSI ATTACK, HOWEVER, APPEARED ON THE SAME DAY AS THE PEOPLE'S DAILY PIECE MENTIONED ABOVE. AND THAT PIECE WAS WRITTEN BY "CHU LAN," WHO HAS ALSO BLASTED DEFENDERS OF RASPHIGI'S "PINES" AND "FOUNTAINS OF ROME." IT WOULD SEEM THAT THOSE ATTEMPTING TO "SETTLE OLD SCORES" WITH CHIANG CHING ARE CONNECTED TO THOSE HIT EARLIER FOR PRAISING WESTERN MUSIC AND, POSSIBLY, FOR APPROVING ANTONIONI'S VISIT.

4. WITH SEVERAL ARTISTIC CREATIONS UNDER ATTACK, NCNA MARCH 1 ATTEMPTED TO STRIKE A POSITIVE NOTE BY PRAISING "ON THE BANK OF LIEHMA RIVER." THE PLAY CONCERNS A VILLAGE THAT MODELS ITSELF ON TACHAI, AND IS PROBABLY SAFE TO PRAISE. NCNA MUST NOW BE SUFFERING FOR ITS EARLIER MISSTEP IN CALLING THE ANTI-TACHAI "THREE VISITS TO TAOFENG" AN OPERA WHICH "SINGS THE PRAISES OF THE COMMUNIST SPIRIT" (NCNA, JANUARY 23).

5. COMMENT. THIS APPARENTLY CHIANG-BACKED ASSAULT IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CULTURAL SPHERE COMES AT A TIME WHEN THE MOVEMENT IS BEING BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL IN OTHER AREAS. CHOU EN-LAI MAY WELL HAVE ACQUIESCED IN THE MOVEMENT'S LATEST TURN VIEWING MADAME MAO'S ASSAULTS ON CULTURE AS A RELATIVELY HARMLESS VENTING OF RADICAL FRUSTRATIONS. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT CHIANG HAS BROKEN FREE OF BONDS THAT HELD HER DOWN SINCE THE CULTURAL GROUP UNDER WU TEH--AND ULTIMATELY UNDER STATE COUNCIL PREMIER CHOU-- WAS CREATED NEARLY THREE YEARS AGO (SEE 1971 HONG KONG 5097).

IF SO, THE ASSAULT ON CULTURE MAY YET DRAW BLOOD AT THE UPPER
LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP.
OSBORN

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